

**EASTERN MONTANA RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING**  
**Miles City, Montana**  
**January 15, 2004**

**Attendance**

RAC: Betty Aye, Jack Bailey, Howard Boggess, Jamie Byrne, Colby Branch, Mack Cole, John Ensign, John Gibson, Marion Hanson, Charles Hauptman, Becky Kallevig, Robert Lubbers, David Smith and Marty Ulrich.

BLM: David McIlnay, Sandy Brooks, Mark Jacobsen, Rebecca Makor, Mary Bloom, David Squires, Todd Yeager and Glade Hadden.

**Field Manager Updates:**

**Sandy Brooks, BiFO-**

- The Billings Field Office continues to work on the OHV Travel Management Plan. The four areas included in this plan are Shepard Ah Nei, Pryor Mountains, Horsethief and Acton. Shepard Ah Nei has heavy OHV use and BLM is being sued by a private homeowner for noise and dust pollution. Oral arguments will take place in February. The Horsethief area was scheduled for a 3000 acre fuel reduction project, but the contractor has had equipment problems. The project should ahead next week and will take approximately one month.

The Forest Service will be holding public meetings the first part of February in Bridger, Red Lodge, Billings, and Columbus. BLM will have a table set up at each of these meetings for public comments. BLM will be working on catching up to the Forest Service's plan which is doable since the Forest Service has a larger area.

- Denver is handling the contract for the Pompey's Pillar visitor Center. The contract should be granted in the spring with the ground breaking in the summer. The project is scheduled to be completed in 2005. Clark Days are the last Sunday in July which includes various activities such as a canoe float, pancake breakfast, bird hikes, camping, music, oral history, etc.
- R.L.F. Bighorn Properties, LLC (Bighorn Properties) and their agent Rock Mountain Timberlands continue to pursue a road right-of-way in the Grove Creek area. A decision letter requiring the land owner to pay for an environmental impact statement has been issued. BLM has to approve the contractor hired to the EIS. BLM will still be responsible for making the right-of-way decision.
- There are no plans this year for gathering wild horses in the Pryor Mountains. BLM will continue with the fertility plan. The wildhorse budget has been cut in

half so there will be no adoptions planned for this year except for one in South Dakota. The horse population increases by approximately 20% each year.

**David McIlnay, MCFO-**

- The Billings Gazette ran an article on coal bed methane that was well-written and well-balanced. The article can be found on the Billings Gazette web page.
- The Miles City Field Office is coordinating the Resource Management Plan Revision. The documents for the Powder River and Big Dry areas will become one. Document production will be contracted.
- There is training session titled, “Planning Nuts and Bolts” in February. RAC members are invited to attend. More information will be forthcoming.
- OHV continues to be a priority in the Miles City Field Office with five priority areas. David Squires will give a presentation later on in the meeting.
- The Fire Management Plan will be updated regarding goals, staff, etc. Method of funding has changed and the plan will need to be modified accordingly. It is due October, 2004. The Forest Service has a meeting in Billings next week and BLM will be attending. An extensive program will be implemented in terms of getting people red carded. The BLM is working with various people to harvest timber on both private and public lands in the Missouri Breaks fire area. The BLM is also trying to put together a timber salvage plan in the Swain/Moon Creek fire area. At this point, it is not clear if there is a need in the market for this.
- The pilot effort continues with Hanging Women Creek. Meetings with all interested and involved parties continue. Progress is being made. A smaller group of volunteers from the group has been formed and will be reporting back to the main group. Jack Bailey has been closely involved in this project and noted the main issue is the water. As required under the EIS/RMP amendment, a water management plan must be submitted before authorization to use the land is given.

**CBNG Presentation**

Mary Bloom from the Miles City Field Office gave a brief history and current status update on Coal Bed Natural Gas. Mary updated the group on the Hanging Women meetings. She noted the meetings consist of concerned citizens, industry representatives, landowners, etc., who are working on getting their concerns and needs known and BLM, attempt to have all parties discuss their issues and develop a collaborative problem solving process.

The group has been broken down to a smaller committee that will be taking proposals back to the larger group. There are mixed feelings and everyone is looking at various

ideas. The next meeting is yet to be determined. The RAC will be notified of the time and place.

The EIS/RMP directs interagency working groups to be established. Currently there are four task groups from an inter-agency working group that works on various areas. They are water, aquatics, wildlife, and air. Cultural resources are also at the top of the list. The next CBNG Interagency Working Group meeting will be Billings on February 18, 2004. The RAC will be notified of the time and place.

### **Knowlton/OHV post'03 hunting season/recreation report**

David Squires from the Miles City Field Office updated the RAC on the OHV Travel Plan. There are two phases being implemented. The first phase is signing. Signing for "Stay on Existing Roads and Trails" was started last fall. There are two types of signs being posted: Portal Signs; which are wooden signs--- and "Acknowledge the Rules" and Regulatory signs informing travelers of off road travel restrictions.

The second phase is travel planning. Areas have been prioritized with Knowlton being at the top of the list. Knowlton was a pilot project that was started in 2000 and was recently completed. There are six additional high priority areas and two moderate priority areas to be completed. David handed out copies of maps with the priority areas identified for the group.

OHV enforcement continues to be a concern as well as how to establish land boundaries and access to federal land and the Yellowstone River.

### **Public Comment Period**

No one was present to provide public comments.

Todd Yeager from the Miles City Field Office was invited to speak to the group regarding the new grazing issues/regulations. Todd noted there are two efforts underway: #1; Federal Register Notice to change rules; and #2; The EIS.

Comments will be taken until February 6, 2004 for the Federal Register Notice and comments will be taken until March 2, 2004 for the EIS. Comments can be submitted via the website or mail.

On February 2, 2004 from 6pm-10pm, the BLM will hold a public meeting at the Holiday Inn in Billings, Montana. Todd addressed questions and concerns the RAC had regarding the grazing issues.

### **Billings Shooting Area Subcommittee Report**

Robert Lubbers presented recommendations from the Billings Shooting Area Subcommittee. The areas involved are Acton, 17 Mile, Shepherd Ah Nei, and 21 Mile.

It was suggested the areas be divided for multiple use activity. There was some discussion on how this could be accomplished. Robert presented the group with a hand out detailing the recommendations of the sub-committee. He feels comments are valuable and encourages the RAC members to submit their ideas in writing. The RAC will be individually sending their proposed alternatives and solutions to the subcommittee by mid-February.

### **Weatherman Draw/ACEC extension report**

Weatherman Draw is a 15,000 acre area south of Bridger, Montana. 2400 of the 15,000 acres have been inventoried and 31 new archeological sites have been discovered. Weatherman Draw is now listed as a National Register District which gives the area added protection under the law.

The original ACEC has been expanded from 4500 acres to 8211 acres for drilling purposes. Recommendations have been submitted to the State Director to finalize plans.

Proposals include:

1. Remove from consideration oil/gas leases that would affect the area.
2. Enlarge the area.
3. Remove hold on leases outside the area.
4. Continue with cultural resource data.

Two of three leases went out for public bid. The third lease was withdrawn. Funding for this project is on a year-by-year basis. A budget of \$10,000 has been granted by the Washington office for field schools. There are currently two field schools. Becky Kallevig noted the Archeology Society will be helping with the foot work to locate cultural resources. They will provide volunteers and some funding for the project.

Weatherman Draw is a very controversial project. There is a large amount of rock art in the area, and it was noted that rock art has never been successfully removed and preserved. Yet many feel the need for oil/gas is of utmost importance. Discussions concluded that the bottom line is economic development vs. cultural preservation.

### **RAC Discussion Period, Items for Action**

The council members jointly identified the following list of items for RAC action:

1. Maintaining current sub-committees
2. Energy issues affecting BLM/developing a "Do It Right" definition for CBM.
3. Hanging Women Creek
4. Travel Management Plan (Billings Field Office)
5. Grove Creek sub-division
6. Resource Management Plan (Miles City Field Office)

7. Access to the Yellowstone River and public land
8. SWL
9. Powder River Depot
10. Cedar Creek Battlefield/Ash Creek Battlefield
11. Miles City Field Office Fire Management Plan
12. Sage Grouse Issues

The RAC members will continue/initiate the following efforts:

1. Billings Shooting Area and Weatherman Draw sub-committees
2. Additional meetings and field trips –between quarterly RAC meetings
3. The formation of a sub-committee to map out areas for improved public access (proposed by John Gibson). There is funding available from various sources to assist with this project. The Access Subcommittee consists of John Ensign, Jamie Byrnes, John Gibson, Howard Boggess, Becky Kallevig and David Smith.

The RAC members took turns giving comments as part of an “After Action Review” about the meeting(s). Mark Jacobsen will compile these comments and use them as a guide for future meetings.

### **Meeting evaluation/wrap-up/agenda**

The next meeting has been set for May 5 (evening social) & 6 (meeting), 2004. Meeting location will be at Sidney. Possible agenda items may include:

- Hanging Woman Drainage CBNG meetings/working group reports
- Miles City Field Office RMP update
- Miles City Field Office Fire Plan
- Reports by Billings Shooting Area, Weatherman Draw and Public Access subcommittees.